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My name is Rashana J. Graham, resident of Bridgeport, and educator of middle school scholars in the city of New Haven. I have been an educator for the past 14 years in various educational settings. Encountering the vast disparities from the underserved to the affluent schools, has caused me to recognize the inequities in the programming, personnel and services of my school system.

Because of this, I am in full support of Bill 948. In New Haven, students are subjected to classrooms filled with deteriorating furniture, outdated curriculum and fewer highly-qualified professionals than their more affluent peers. These students, like all others, deserve more than faulty 3 decade old desks and leaky bathroom sinks. They deserve to have ergonomic preferential seating and culturally diverse curriculum, in addition to, wrap around services that nurture the whole child.

There is also the dire need to provide after-school enrichment programs within the walls of their schools. Additionally, these students deserve access to fresh and healthy meals that contribute to the health of the child, rather than the carbohydrate-filled, frozen meals that leave our students highly energized for their inevitable “crash” in the mid-afternoon. I believe this bill should be passed because the students in New Haven, along with those cities of similar demographics, deserve the chance to compete in a society that isn’t built for them.

With this bill we can empower the whole child to thrive in our current society.